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**Yahwistic Diversity and the Hebrew Bible: State of the Field, Desiderata
and Research Perspectives in a Necessary Debate on the Formative Period
of Judaism(s).**

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ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-193498>

Book Section

Published Version

Originally published at:

Hensel, Benedikt (2020). Yahwistic Diversity and the Hebrew Bible: State of the Field, Desiderata and Research Perspectives in a Necessary Debate on the Formative Period of Judaism(s). In: Hensel, Benedikt; Nocquet, Dany R; Adamczewski, Bartosz. Yahwistic Diversity and the Hebrew Bible: Tracing Perspectives of Group Identity from Judah, Samaria, and the Diaspora in Biblical Traditions. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1-44.

Yahwistic Diversity and the Hebrew Bible

Edited by
BENEDIKT HENSEL,
DANY NOCQUET,
and BARTOSZ ADAMCZEWSKI

*Forschungen
zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe*

Mohr Siebeck

Forschungen zum Alten Testament
2. Reihe

Edited by

Konrad Schmid (Zürich) · Mark S. Smith (Princeton)
Hermann Spieckermann (Göttingen) · Andrew Teeter (Harvard)

120



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from Judah, Samaria, and the Diaspora
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and Bartosz Adamczewski

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ISBN 978-3-16-158304-9 / eISBN 978-3-16-158305-6

DOI 10.1628/978-3-16-158305-6

ISSN 1611-4914 / eISSN 2568-8367 (Forschungen zum Alten Testament, 2. Reihe)

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

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The book was typeset using Minion typeface and printed on non-aging paper by Laupp & Göbel in Gomariningen, and bound by Buchbinderei Nädele in Nehren.

Printed in Germany.

Preface

This volume is the product of the conference “Samaria and Diaspora in the Persian and Hellenistic Period: Influence, Significance and Contributions to the Pentateuch and the Prophets” held at the Institut Protestant de Théologie in Montpellier (France) on the 6th/8th of December, 2018. The conference was organized by Dany Nocquet (Montpellier), Benedikt Hensel (Zurich), and Bartosz Adamczewski (Warsaw).

Through the intriguing papers presented at the conference and the lively and fruitful discussions, the organizers and the participants of the conference soon realized that the main focus of the conference is not only Samaria in its various literary, textual, and historical forms, but the historical phenomenon of “Yahwistic diversity” as a whole and as a key feature for the history and religious history of the post-monarchic period. That is why we as the editors of this volume decided to open up the topic in an attempt to address “Yahwistic Diversity and the Hebrew Bible” and as a starting point for future conferences, workshops, and/or volumes – as this is for sure a field of research that needs more detailed studies.

Most of the essays in this volume are expanded and revised versions of papers presented at this conference. Additionally, Jonathan Miles Robker (Münster) accepted our invitation to contribute his thoughts on the subject of textual traditions in 2 Kings 17, which allows some specific corollaries on Samaritan-Judean relations. We also invited Hervé Gonzalez (Collège de France / University of Lausanne) and Marc Mendoza (Autonomous University of Barcelona) for a paper on the administrative history and demographic changes in Samaria during the early Hellenistic period, as research is still in need of solid historical reconstructions of the region of Samaria that embody a critical approach to the biblical and mostly polemical view of its history. We are very grateful to all the authors for their huge efforts.

We would also like to offer our thanks to all contributors to the conference for their constructive and well-focused presentations and to everyone for participating and further stimulating the discussion during and after the conference. It was a very fruitful conversation that combined literary-historical, textual-historical, and historical approaches, and we are very excited to present some of its most important results in this volume.

We want to thank all those who made the conference and the conference volume possible. Dany Nocquet and the Institut Protestant de Théologie in Mont-

pellier organized and sponsored the conference. We thank the editors of the *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 2nd series, Konrad Schmid (Zurich), Mark S. Smith (Princeton), Hermann Spieckermann (Göttingen), and Andrew Teeter (Cambridge, MA), for accepting this volume in the series. Victoria Riedl (student assistant to Benedikt Hensel at the University of Mainz/Germany) provided magnificent help at every stage of the editing of the volume. Last but not least, we are very grateful to Peter Altmann (Zurich), who helped us with the editing of the English essays.

Zurich/Montpellier/Warsaw, September 2019

Benedikt Hensel
Dany Nocquet
Bartosz Adamczewski

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Yahwistic Diversity and the Hebrew Bible:
State of the Field, Desiderata, and Research Perspectives
in a Necessary Debate on the Formative Period of Judaism(s)¹

BENEDIKT HENSEL

The following essay reviews and proposes new avenues in the historical analysis of early Judaism and its impact on identity-building processes in the southern Levant. Its crucial interest lies in demonstrating that the ideas responsible for the emergence of Judaism were developed in a context of Yahwistic diversity. The underlying perspective of this essay concerns the observation that a broad variety of different Yahwistic groups existed inside and outside Judah during the sixth to first century BCE. As recent scholarship has increasingly recognized, this period had a major impact on the theological and literary histories of early Judaism. This epoch also witnessed the shaping of other central identity markers, such as the institution of the central temple and the Torah. This leads to the main thesis of the essay: Contrary to the current majority view, the formation process of early Judaism takes place less as an inner-Judean development than as the complex and multilayered process of negotiation between diverse groups.

The essay provides a critical discussion of the current paradigm of the emergence of Early Judaism (section 1), and a detailed, critical review of the recent critical objections against this theory from the perspective of exilic and postexilic diversity (section 2). Additionally, the essay presents the author's cornerstones that result from this very debate and provides a perspective for future research in this matter that attempts a comprehensive description of the a) religious, b) sociological, and c) literary history of the phenomenon of diversification within ancient Yahwism (sections 3–5). The essay will conclude with an overview of the studies in this volume (section 6). This program results in the following detailed structure for the essay:

¹ This essay is the result of a broader project entitled "The History of the Pentateuch: Combining Literary and Archaeological Approaches," funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (Sinergia project CRSII1 160785). The project – a joint venture of the universities of Zurich, Lausanne, and Tel Aviv – is directed by Konrad Schmid (Zurich), Christophe Nihan and Thomas Römer (Lausanne), and Israel Finkelstein and Oded Lipschits (Tel Aviv).

1. Judean Perspectives on Israel's History: State of the Field
2. Towards a Paradigm Shift: Four Critical Objections from Recent Religious-Historical, Historical, and Exegetical Research
 - 2.1 Plurality Rather Than a Monoculture
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3. "Binnen-israelitische Ausdifferenzierungsprozesse": A Matrix for Future Research
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4. The Hebrew Bible as a Reflection of Exilic and Postexilic Yahwistic Diversity
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 - 4.3 Different Ideas of "Israel" within the Hebrew Bible
 - 4.4 Textual Traditions and Yahwistic Variety
5. Conclusion and Perspectives for Future Research
6. Overview of This Volume

1. Judean Perspectives on Israel's History: State of the Field

The period spent by Judah in the Babylonian Exile – the period *after* Babylon's conquest of the small state of Judah and its capital city of Jerusalem until the Persian takeover of Babylon in 550 BCE and the establishment of the basic character of the Persian Empire – has served as a decisive turning point in the history of Judaism and the establishment of the scriptures of the Hebrew Bible at least since the commendable works by the German biblical and ancient Near Eastern scholar Julius Wellhausen in his *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*.² According to Wellhausen's seminal insights, the majority of the biblical tradition emerges *not* from the preexilic monarchic period, but rather from the scribal work of

² Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*.

later generations of Judean, and later Jewish, groups. These groups reflect the demise of Jerusalem in 586 BCE and the end of Judah's political-territorial history in their transmission, literary supplementation, and re-conceptualizations.

As is widely recognized in modern scholarship, the central event of Judah's demise and exile led to innovative movement a) in the theological and ideological reflections of Israel's faith, b) in its literary traditions, and c) even in its socio-cultural search for a communal identity. These movements merge in the formational processes within the rise of Judaism in the postexilic period (beginning in the final third of the sixth cent. BCE). This epoch attests to the decisive *theological innovations* and *identity-forming directions*. These include, among others, the development of monotheism as the dominant and later normative guiding principle of Judaism and the functionally connected emergence of the notion of an exclusive cult centralization in Jerusalem (*one* location for Israel's *one* God). In addition are the formation of specific *identity markers* that become significant for later developments in Judaism, such as the use of Torah and the establishment of Judaism as a *religion of the book*, as well as circumcision, dietary prescriptions, and sanctification of the Sabbath. Especially the shaping of the identity of early Judaism in the Second Temple period has received increasing attention in recent years, as, e.g., the monograph by Weingart (2014),³ Ben Zvi and Edelman's *Imagining the Other: Constructing Israelite Identity in the Early Second Temple Period* (2015), Grohmann's *Identität und Schrift: Fortschreibungsprozesse als Mittel religiöser Identitätsbildung* (2017), and the volume *Denkt nicht mehr an das Frühere! Begründungsressourcen in Esra/Nehemia und Jes 40–66 im Vergleich* (Häusl, 2018) illustrate.

As a result, especially the Persian period (ca. sixth to fourth cent. BCE) has been also characterized as the *formative phase* of early Judaism and its normative scriptures. The basic idea is that these innovations already existed in full upon the return of the displaced Judeans from exile in the second half of the sixth century or (as the most recent scholarship tends to conclude) that they reached their final form in the Persian period. In this way, one also expresses that the biblical texts dated in the exilic and postexilic periods appear exclusively to represent the interests of the *Judeans* returning from exile. The diversity of different Israelite groups in the description of Israel's monarchic period (until 586 BCE) appears to give way to something of a "Judean monoculture."

One envisions that those elites responsible for the development of innovations in the Judean exile then carried them out beginning in 539 BCE in a comprehensive, rigorous, and prompt manner (sixth to early fifth cent. BCE) in Judah (and with some delay in Samaria as well). One might think here especially of cult centralization in contrast to the implied uncontrolled proliferation

³ Weingart, *Stämmevolk*.

by those remaining in the land, as well as the introduction of the Torah edited in the exile as a normative religious element. Scholars such as the Israeli archaeologist Ephraim Stern have called this process a “religious revolution,” a view adopted by many others.⁴ Stern argues that Jerusalem functioned as the only center during the Persian period of what would later become Judean orthodoxy. This view follows from the biblical, or more precisely, the *Judean* scribal reflection of the history of Israel presented, for example, in the so-called Deuteronomistic History (that is, the biblical books from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings), the book of Ezra-Nehemiah, or the book of Chronicles.

Jan Assmann has subsequently popularized this interpretation of the history of the emergence of Judaism through the matrix of his culture-historical model.⁵ He draws on fundamental elements concerning the *formation of memory* and *identity construction* in ancient cultures as comparative examples for the *genesis of Judaism* in this very period for support. His approach has opened the discussion of Judaism’s origins to broad and interdisciplinary culture-historical debates.

2. Towards a Paradigm Shift: Four Critical Objections from Recent Religious-Historical, Historical, and Exegetical Research

Present scholarship only views the various *Judean groups of Mesopotamian provenance* – that is, those parts of the population that underwent exile to Mesopotamia after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE – as the guiding social, religious, and ideological entities responsible for the formative and constitutive elements of the postexilic development and formational processes of Judaism. While fully agreeing with regard to the impact of the early postexilic period on the formative processes of early Judaism and the general hermeneutical key provided by Wellhausen in his historical distinction between historical and biblical Israel for study of the Hebrew Bible, the primary focus on the Judean exiles proves quite reductionist. The following discussion will identify four major objections from recent historical and biblical scholarship that erode the classical paradigm and point to a necessary reevaluation of the emergence of early Judaism and the Hebrew Bible in the exilic and postexilic period. If accorded their full weight, attention to these circumstances could result in a completely different understanding of the emergence of Judaism.

⁴ See Stern, “Religious Revolution,” 199–205; idem, “Many Gods,” 395–403.

⁵ See, e.g., Assmann, *Exodus*.

2.1 Plurality Rather Than a Monoculture

Likely the most important fundamental scholarly realization in recent years is the following: A growing body of archaeological data suggests that there was not one monolithic Judean community in postexilic Judah/Yehud. Archaeological evidence demonstrates the existence of a variety of “Jewish” communities inside and outside of Judah itself. Temples or cultic installations dedicated to YHWH provide good indications for the presence of such communities of Yahwistic belief (meaning the veneration of mainly YHWH, the god of Israel). The *Persian period* attests to YHWH temples not only in Jerusalem, but also on Mount Gerizim in the province of Samaria – the former kingdom of Israel (fifth to second cent. BCE). Another is attested on the Egyptian island of Elephantine (around 407 BCE according to literary and archaeological evidence;⁶ TAD A4.7/4.8/4.9). There are also indications of a sanctuary in Idumea to the south of Judah (maybe in Maqqedah or in Maresha; mentioned on an ostrakon in fourth cent. BCE, ISAP 1283/AL 283).⁷ The *Hellenistic period* provides evidence for the additional temples of Judean groups: one in Tell Yahûdiye (Leontopolis, Egypt; founded 163 BCE; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.388; 13.62–73; 20.236; *B. J.* 1.33; 7.426–436; and ceased service 72 CE; Josephus, *B. J.* 7.426–436). The second – though debate continues⁸ – concerns a temple or some sort of cult location in Transjordan, namely, in the Ammanitis in ‘*Araq el-Emir* (29 km east of Jericho). Support comes from two inscriptions found close to it – possibly at the home of the Judean family of the Tobiads of the third or second century BCE. Research along the line of this “Yahwistic diversity” was done especially by Grabbe (2010),⁹ Zsengellér (2011),¹⁰ Frevel (2016),¹¹ Hensel (2016),¹² and Granerød (2016),¹³ who offered a broad (yet preliminary) view of the collective evidence known to us today together with a religious-historical evaluation of this phenomenon.

⁶ On the Elephantine temple see Pilgrim, “Jahwe-Tempel,” 142–145 and Rosenberg, “Jewish Temple at Elephantine,” 4–13. On religion and society of the Judeo-Aramaean community at Elephantine see Granerød, *Dimensions*; and Rohrmoser, *Judäo-Aramäer von Elephantine*.

⁷ *Editio princeps*: Lemaire, “Nouvelles Inscriptions araméennes,” text 283, table XLVIII, 149–156. The most recent edition (2016) of this ostrakon is in Yardeni, *Jesselson Collection*, 114–115. In 2015 Lemaire presented his most recent reading of the ostrakon: Lemaire, “Levantine Epigraphy,” 118–119 (with fig. 3.25) – applying several changes in reaction to critical remarks on Lemaire’s readings and reconstructions of the text by Porten and Yardeni, see, e.g. Porten/Yardeni, “Unprovenienced Idumean Ostraca,” 87 fig. 8, with page 77; Porten/Yardeni, “House of Baalrim,” 142 fig. 21, with page 112–113; Porten/Yardeni, *Textbook*, liii fig. 40, and page xxi.

⁸ See for the discussion Hensel, *Juda und Samaria*, 213–214. A critical voice in this debate about identifying the remains is Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 343.

⁹ Grabbe, “Many Nations Will Be Joined,” 175–187.

¹⁰ Zsengellér, “Egytemplomáság,” 130–187.

¹¹ Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 323–326.

¹² Hensel, *Juda und Samaria*, 210–214.

¹³ Granerød, *Dimensions*.

Meanwhile, documents (mainly private certificates from late sixth / early fifth cent. BCE) published by Pearce and Wunsch prove the existence of larger Yahwistic communities in the otherwise unknown *al-Yahudu* ("town of Judah") in Mesopotamia.¹⁴ No Yahweh temple or shrine is attested in Mesopotamia, though Knauf refers very cautiously to a cuneiform archive from Iraq that may mention such a Judean temple.¹⁵ Nevertheless, there is good reason to assume that the Judean communities had one or even several sanctuaries.¹⁶

Additionally, Yahwism *within* the provincial borders of Judah was by no means singularly dominated by the version found in Jerusalem. Evidence that was brought to scholarly attention through, e.g., the treatment of the respective material by Knowles (2006),¹⁷ Pummer (2007),¹⁸ Valkama (2010),¹⁹ Edelman (2010),²⁰ Becking (2011),²¹ Lynch (2014),²² Frevel/Pyschny (2014),²³ and Frevel (2016)²⁴ point to numerous (possible) sanctuaries in the area of Judah – though most of them remain disputed. Especially the historical case of "Bethel" and its possible influence in the exilic and Persian period is heavily debated.²⁵ As suggestive as the explanatory models of scholarship might be, they rest almost exclusively on specific textual interpretations, and historical probabilities especially for the Judean commissioning of Bethel in the Babylonian era lack archaeological support. The path through the extensive archaeological evidence from Judah requires further exploration in order to grasp the complex details of the religious-sociological relationships in the Persian province of Judah. One outstanding study along this line is Frevel and Pyschny's pioneering volume

¹⁴ Pearce/Wunsch, *Documents*; see also Knauf/Guillaume, *History*, 153–156. For a rich comparison of the *al-Yahudu* evidence with the biblical sources see Rom-Shiloni, "Untold Stories," 124–134.

¹⁵ Cf. Knauf, "Glorious Days," 273, with note 84.

¹⁶ If we are right in assuming that there is strong literary activity amongst the exiles, then the existence of a temple would be a plausible pre-condition for this. For further considerations see Knauf/Guillaume, *History*, 155.

¹⁷ Knowles, *Centrality Practised*, 44–48.

¹⁸ Pummer, "Pentateuch," 250–251.

¹⁹ Valkama, "Archaeological Remains," 39–59.

²⁰ Edelman, "Cultic Sites," 82–103.

²¹ Becking, "Identity," 71.

²² Lynch, *Monotheism*, 60–61.

²³ Frevel/Pyschny, "Introduction," 1–22.

²⁴ Frevel, *Geschichte Israels*, 325–326.

²⁵ That Bethel was intact after 722 is proposed by Knauf, "Bethel," 291–349; idem, "Glorious Days," 273. Referencing Knauf's proposal and with literary-critical consequences for the Bethel episodes of the Jacob cycle see Becker, "Jakob," 159–185; see also Davies, "Monotheism," 31–33. On the missing archaeological evidence for the sixth to fourth century BCE, see Finkelstein/Singer-Avitz, "Reevaluating Bethel," 33–48. But see now Lipschits, "Bethel Revisited," 233–245, with a presentation of yet unpublished findings at E.P. 915 that may indicate activity in Bethel after 722 BCE. I interpret Bethel as a "Samaritan" site for the time after 722 BCE and until the building of Mount Gerizim as the new Samaritan main sanctuary, see Hensel, "Cult Centralization," 254–257.

A “Religious Revolution” in Yehûd? *The Material Culture of the Persian Period as a Test Case*, published in 2014.²⁶ The essays gathered in this volume can prove the local distinctions between YHWH cults in the Persian province Yehud and its neighboring regions by means of very specific and detailed historical case studies of Judah’s material culture. Frevel/Pyschny are to be merited for describing the phenomenon of *regional pluriformity of Yahwism* with a regionally concentrated and therefore detailed scope on the historical and cultural development of regional cults and their complex interactions.

The general conclusion that arises from these studies is that after the demise of Judah and the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, the YHWH cult was carried on at various sanctuaries on an interim basis. Local Yahwistic cults are assumed in Lachish, Mizpah, or Bethel as compensating for the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and over time taking on independent shapes that then confronted the community returning from exile.²⁷

The Yahwistic group in the province and region of Samaria with its cultic center at Mount Gerizim is certainly the most prominent group among the non-Judean groups. These Samaritan Yahwists – later known as “Samaritans” – have returned to a place of central interest in Hebrew Bible research only in recent years. Significant work on the nature of this community includes the recent monographs on the Samaritans by Kartveit (2009),²⁸ Dušek (2012),²⁹ Knoppers (2013),³⁰ Pummer (2016),³¹ Heckl (2016),³² Hensel (2016),³³ and Nocquet (2017).³⁴ A long-desired critical edition of the Samaritan Pentateuch is currently in process under the auspices of Schorch (2018).³⁵

New evidence for Samaritan communities outside of Samaria comes from the Greek inscription on a sundial that dates to the fourth to second century BCE and was found on the site of the Samaritan sanctuary of Mount Gerizim. Hensel recently published and discussed the text of the inscription.³⁶ This inscription could be a “little sensation,” as it is the first attestation of Samaritans in Egypt

²⁶ Frevel/Pyschny, *A “Religious Revolution” in Yehûd?*

²⁷ Valkama, “Archaeological Remains,” 39–59.

²⁸ Kartveit, *Origin*.

²⁹ Dušek, *Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions*. Dušek concentrates primarily on the Gerizim inscriptions. In two of the study’s three chapters, however, he seeks to identify the YHWH-worshippers of Mount Gerizim (ibid., 65–118; Chapter 2), and to outline a history of the southern Levant between Antiochus III and Antiochus IV (ibid., 119–151; Chapter 3).

³⁰ Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*.

³¹ Pummer, *Profile*.

³² Heckl, *Neuanfang und Kontinuität*.

³³ Hensel, *Juda und Samaria*.

³⁴ Nocquet, *Samarie*.

³⁵ The first volume of this edition (“Leviticus”) was published in 2018: Schorch, *Samaritan Pentateuch*.

³⁶ Hensel, “Cult Centralization,” 236–239.

besides the (often polemical) mentions of Samaritans by Josephus: the donator of the sundial, a Samari(t)an, clearly designates himself as “Ptolemaios ... of Egypt” (Πτολεμαῖ[ος] (...) τῶν ἀπ’ Α[ιγ]ύπτου ἁγίων δ[...], lines 2–3). The line is broken after the ἁγίων in line 3. The substantive ἅγιον is also well known as the translation of the Hebrew מִקְדָּשׁ or מִשְׁכָּן in the LXX. So this inscription could refer to a Samaritan sanctuary in Egypt in the Hellenistic Period, which would syntactically make the most sense of line 3, translating: “(Ptolemaios) from the sanctuary in Egypt.”³⁷ The clear plural of ἅγιον does not present a problem because the rendering of a sanctuary is well known from other Greek (pagan and Jewish-Christian) literature³⁸ and the translation of the Hebrew equivalents (in singular!) in the LXX (e.g., Exod 36:1; Lev 19:30 LXX; cf. Jdt 4:12; 1 Macc 3:43; Heb 8:2, 9).

In short, one can conclude that the Judean community consisting of exilic returnees with its supposed main center Jerusalem was *not the only Yahwistic community* in the postexilic period.

2.2 Contact and Interaction Rather Than Exclusivity

Even if the biblical texts *in no way* contained explicit mention of the existence of these groups in the exilic and postexilic periods, the evidence for the contact between these groups continues to increase. The Judean group in Jerusalem, therefore, certainly also *knew of these groups*. Several observations concerning the test case of Samaria lead to this conclusion.

(1.) The well-researched material culture of Samaria and Judah reveals a high degree of *mutual influence* of both regions on a cultural-historical level (Knoppers, Hensel).³⁹ The commonalities between the groups are such that their common basis goes beyond merely the shared cultural past of Israel and Judah in the monarchic period. It instead points to contact and interaction taking place between the two Yahwistic communities across the full gamut of human activity. The two groups remained in continuous contact with each other, interacting with each other on the most diverse levels (though interaction took place especially among religious elites and scribes). I have dealt with the relationship of Judah and Samaria in a monograph published in 2016.⁴⁰ Building on the dis-

³⁷ Another possibility would be that ἁγίων functions as an adjective here for the following substantive, in this way referring to some “holy goods” or the like (probably ἁγίων δ[ωρῶν] [= “holy goods”]), which Ptolemaios brought to Mount Gerizim, as has been suggested by Meerson, “One God Supreme,” 46–47.

³⁸ See the examples given in Bauer, *Wörterbuch NT*, 5th edition, s. v. ἅγιος, 19; and Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s. v. ἅγιος, 68.

³⁹ For a detailed analysis of all the evidence referenced here see Hensel, *Juda und Samaria*, 35–162; idem, “On the Relationship”; and Knoppers, “Aspects,” 159–174; idem, *Jews and Samaritans*, esp. 103–109.

⁴⁰ See Hensel, *Juda und Samaria*; and (with additional considerations) idem, “On the Relationship.”

cussions there, I would argue that describing the relations between Samaritans and Judeans first in terms of competition and then as separation are inadequate. I suggest instead an alternative *model of mutual contacts* for the period between the sixth and the second century BCE. Samaritan-Judean relations were in fact not constantly marred by bitter conflict, but rather reflected a state of parallel co-existence. This is especially true for the Persian period, not least because the two groups of YHWH-worshippers dwelled in different provinces. It was not before the late fourth or third century BCE that relations between Judah and Samaria slowly began to sour, initially due to political and economic rivalries resulting from the unification of Judah and Samaria into one larger province, meaning that two official Yahwist sanctuaries were – for the first time – forced to compete for the favor of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid potentates.⁴¹ In the later historical development, this potential conflict increasingly affected both groups of YHWH-worshippers. The Jewish polemic against Samaritan YHWH-worshippers serves as an indication for existing tensions and conflicts between both denominations of “Israel.” Polemics against the Gerizim-community are attested *outside* the biblical canon only from the second half of the second century BCE, and then dramatically increased in the frequency of attestation and in the nature and variety of polemical statements. Corresponding religious conflicts between Samaritan and Jewish YHWH-worshippers most likely developed over the course of the fourth and third centuries.

(2.) The Elephantine correspondence TAD A.4.7–4.9 (407 BCE) indicates that the religious and literate elites had at least semi-regular contact with each other.⁴² There are also certain biblical texts (see the following point and section 3.3 for the discussion about the concepts of different imagination of “Israel” in postexilic biblical literature) that implicitly display various contacts between the other groups in question.

(3.) It is essential in terms of the *religious-historical perspective* to move away from reducing the contacts to the currently favored binary paradigm consisting of the poles of orthodoxy and deviation or sects. This represents exactly Stern’s widely accepted view of a “religious revolution” that judges the historical situation against the backdrop of the biblical narratives, such that the Judean groups constitute the guiding orthodox community. In light of this orthodox community, scholars have thus understood all other groups (to the degree that scholars even notice them) as *deviations* from this norm. The Samaritans, for example, were widely viewed as an Israelite or Jewish sect.⁴³ Most modern schol-

⁴¹ For the details see my *Juda und Samaria*, 218–229, and idem, “Cult Centralization,” 253–254.

⁴² A comprehensive description of the contacts and interactions between Judah and Samaria is given by Hensel, *Juda und Samaria*, 163–229.

⁴³ See Pummer, “Samaritanism,” 1–24.

ars suggest that there were serious religious conflicts as well as economic and political rivalries between Judah and Samaria throughout the entire Second Temple period – starting with the erection of the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim, which scholars identify as a rival sanctuary. Some biblical texts do imply such a scenario (such as Ezra 4:1–5, 6–24; Neh 1–6; 2 Kgs 17:24–41⁴⁴); and Josephus' *Antiquitates*⁴⁵ (first cent. CE) and export it to the postexilic and especially the Persian period.

Within this paradigm, the Judeans on Elephantine are likewise considered a “Jewish sect.” Interpreters depict them as a group that fled to the Elephantine prior to the demise of the southern kingdom of Judah. As a result, they were unaware of the innovations brought about by the exile, so they remained polytheistic. They remained unfamiliar with the Torah,⁴⁶ and therefore atavistic from a religious-historical point of view. The fact that this simplistic scenario is quite erroneous has been pointed out by several thorough studies on the complex relationship of Judeans and Samaritans in this period from recent scholarship.⁴⁷ This problematic approach extends to the general scholarly view of the religious history of this epoch as a whole. The complexity of the various interdependencies remains insufficiently unraveled in a number of ways. To give just one example, the Yahwistic group from the Egyptian island of Elephantine – a group that identifies themselves as “Judeans” – wrote a petition to Samaria and to Jerusalem regarding the reconstruction of their YHWH-temple (TAD A4.7/4.8; dated 407 BCE). The Elephantine community later received answers from both Bagohi, the governor of Judah, and Delaiah, probably the governor of Samaria (TAD A4.9). Although the existence of a text like Deut 12, which heavily promotes the idea of cult centralization, can be presumed for this time, the officials from both provinces offer no real objections based on the law of cult centralization, when they authorized the rebuilding of the Elephantine temple.⁴⁸ This evidence indicates that the cultic and theological boundaries were less clear or even quite undefined in this period, as was stressed in a recent study by Granerød on the diversity of Yahwism in the Persian period.⁴⁹ Thus, the pluriformity of

⁴⁴ For an overview of how these texts influenced tradition and research, see Hensel, *Juda und Samaria*, 12–13 (there with further literature).

⁴⁵ For essential reading on this subject: Pummer, *Samaritans in Josephus*.

⁴⁶ See Kratz, “Elephantine und Qumran,” 129–146.

⁴⁷ See especially the works of Hensel and Heckl cited in this essay.

⁴⁸ They did not, however, explicitly authorize the holocausts in this sanctuary. This could bear the notion that Jerusalem and (Mount Gerizim) had the status of central sanctuaries – and the sanctuaries on the periphery like Elephantine did not have the same status, see Dušek, “Mt. Gerizim Sanctuary,” 118; Rüterswörden, *Deuteronomium*, 36–37. Another possibility cannot, however, be ruled out, that the explicit exclusion of animal sacrifices offers the Egyptian satrap a bribe in exchange for the support in rebuilding the temple; this could have been mandatory to pacify the local Egyptian worshippers of the ram-god Khnum, see Kottsieper, “Religionspolitik,” 150–178.

⁴⁹ Granerød, *Dimensions*, 324–340.

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